

## **The Times and Seasons of a Nauvoo Newspaper**

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In the early days of Illinois statehood, a small city called Nauvoo thrived. The previous swampland was cleared out and the city grew almost as rapidly as the Windy City of Chicago. At that time the Latter-Day Saints, or Mormons, were fleeing persecution in Missouri and sought refuge in the calm state of Illinois. A major contributing factor to this amazing city's growth was its local newspaper, the *Times and Seasons*.

The *Times and Seasons* was first published in November of 1839, edited by Don Carlos Smith, brother to the Latter-Day Saint Prophet Joseph Smith, Jr. Don Carlos Smith was the sole proprietor of the newspaper from December 1840 until his sudden death on August 7, 1841. At this time, his former partner Ebenezer Robinson returned and took over full editorialship. In late 1841, Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles appointed Willard Richards to replace Robinson. Soon afterward, the Prophet Joseph Smith became chief editor and was assisted by John Taylor. In Robinson's final issue he stated, "all things will go right" under the editorialship and direction of Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith remained editor of the *Times and Seasons* until its third volume when he gave full editorship to the Apostle John Taylor due to the great burden which producing a newspaper carries. Taylor was the final editor of the newspaper, with assistance from Willard Richards. The last issue of the *Times and Seasons* was dated February 15, 1846, shortly after the forced mass exodus of Saints began.

The *Times and Seasons* was one of the two major periodicals of the Mormon Church in its early history. Six volumes were published, all on a moveable type printing press located at the Smith's print shop. Each paper consisted of 16 pages. Issues were released once a month in volume one, whereas in volumes two through six, the issues were released twice a month. It was mentioned in the fifteenth issue, that there were intentions to make this periodical a weekly release:

Some time ago the publisher of this Journal issued proposals for publishing a weekly newspaper in this City; but from the pressure of the times, and other unfavorable circumstances, it was postponed. However, as the prospect of better times is already brightening, and a considerable accession of strangers are settling in this neighborhood, it is the intention to publish a weekly newspaper at an earlier date and will issue a Prospectus, in the next number of this Journal.

The weekly issue never became a reality, as we can see from the newspaper dates. Publishing became more and more difficult as time went by and persecution of the church increased. Before leaving their beloved city of Nauvoo, a few members of the church helped to bury the printing press to hide it from persecutors.

The pages of the *Times and Seasons* were filled with more than just the news of the city. Printed in these valuable pages were sections on "Doctrine and Covenants," the "Book of Abraham," and the "Pearl of Great Price," all regarded as scripture in the Mormon faith. Because this was the first place of publication of many of today's Mormon Scripture, it is considered to be a first edition of Scriptures as well as historical newspapers. The Prophet and Apostles also wrote articles concerning churches doctrine, typically trying to dispel false rumors. Among more common newspaper articles, the *Times and Seasons* printed special notices, Temple announcements, information on the organization of Relief Society, poetry and hymns, news concerning emigration, and

missionary reports from England and Canada. The orders to leave Nauvoo and go West are also included in the *Times and Seasons*.

In a city such as Nauvoo, the *Times and Seasons* played a pivotal role in community communication and unity. It was a central agent in publishing Scripture and organizing the Relief Society, the largest woman's organization in the world. It provided the public with news of church growth and teachings of the Prophet and Apostles. Nauvoo was nearly the size of Chicago, and the fastest growing city in Illinois for its short life. Without the organization that the *Times and Seasons* provided, the city could not have prospered as it did.

Illinois' early population and economic success was in part a result of the Mormon Church's efforts in Nauvoo between 1839 and 1846. Nauvoo thrived for seven years before persecution forced its inhabitants to leave the city and cross the Rocky Mountains into the present day Salt Lake Valley. The *Times and Seasons* was essential in organizing the exodus from Nauvoo, giving directions for each company or departing group. The success and fall of Nauvoo was a reflection of the community's communication system in which the *Times and Seasons* played a vital role. [From "Harp of Nauvoo," <<http://www.earlyldshymns.com/HarpOfNAvoo.htm>> (Oct. 22, 2004); *Our Heritage: Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*, "Faith in Every Footstep," chapter 6, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. (Oct. 30, 2004); "Times and Seasons," <<http://www.mormonism.com/T&S.htm>> (Oct. 22, 2004); *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1841 and Mar. 15, 1842.]